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The Three Soldiers



Once Upon a Time

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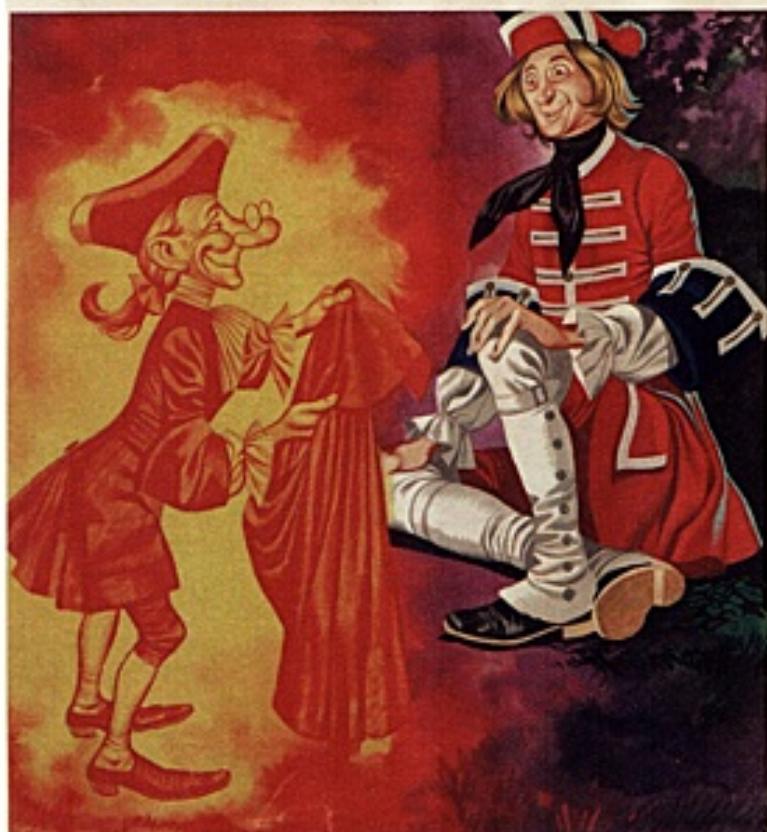
The Three Soldiers



1. Did you ever hear the story of the three poor soldiers who had fought hard in the wars and set off back on the road home, begging their way as they went? They had travelled a long way and were sick at heart at being unwanted in the world, where there was no work for them, no money and no food. "We can't roam around for ever," said one. "What will become of us?"



2. One evening they reached a deep gloomy wood and decided to have a sleep. And to make it all as safe as they could, it was agreed that two should lie down and sleep, while the third sat up and watched, in case wild animals attacked them. When he was tired he was to wake one of the others and sleep in his turn. Thus the task would be shared fairly among the three soldiers.



3. The one keeping watch made a good fire but he had not long sat beside it when, all of a sudden, up came a little dwarf in a red jacket. "We are but three old soldiers with nothing to live on," said the man on watch. "But come and warm yourself."



4. The dwarf thanked him and gave him an old cloak. "Put it on your shoulders and wish for anything you want," the dwarf said. Then the second soldier came on watch and the dwarf again appeared, giving him a purse which would always contain gold.



5. Then came the third soldier's turn to keep watch, and he also had the friendly dwarf for his guest. "Take this horn, my fine fellow," the dwarf told him. "Whenever you play a tune upon it, great crowds will gather around you and dance merrily to the music." "That's a happy idea," chuckled the soldier.



6. In the morning the three soldiers told each other about the dwarf and showed the gifts they had been given. "Now we can become wealthy men with all the gold we shall ever need," said the one who had been given the magic purse. The first soldier then slipped the dwarf's cloak around his shoulders.



7. "If we are to be wealthy men, then we must travel in fine style," he told his friends. So he made a wish and—poof! All in a flash a most elegant coach appeared, pulled by two strong and handsome horses. "Our carriage awaits us," said the third soldier. "Let us go out into the world and have adventure."



8. So the three soldiers climbed into the coach and sat down on padded velvet cushions. "Carry on, driver," said the first soldier, who had been given the magic cloak. "First we will stop at the best inn along the road and have a splendid meal, and then we will seek a castle to live in like millionaires."

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1. The three jolly soldiers, who between them had a purse that filled itself with gold, a magic cloak which could take its wearer anywhere he pleased, and a music-pipe to which everyone must dance, set out from their own castle one day to visit a nearby King. He received them in grand style, for he quite thought that they looked like wealthy princes. "You must dine with me and stay under my roof as long as you wish," he told them. "And while you are here you must meet my only daughter, charming Princess Griselda."



2. A little later, when the soldier with the purse was walking in the Royal garden with the Princess, she asked him about it. And he, rather foolishly, showed her how the magic purse was never empty. "How wonderful," she said.



3. Now this princess was pretty, but she was also very cunning and artful. That night she set to work in her room to make a purse so very like the soldier's that no one could tell one from the other. "That soldier is handsome but a little too careless in his ways to own such a valuable purse," she said to herself. "A purse like that should only be fit for a princess like me."



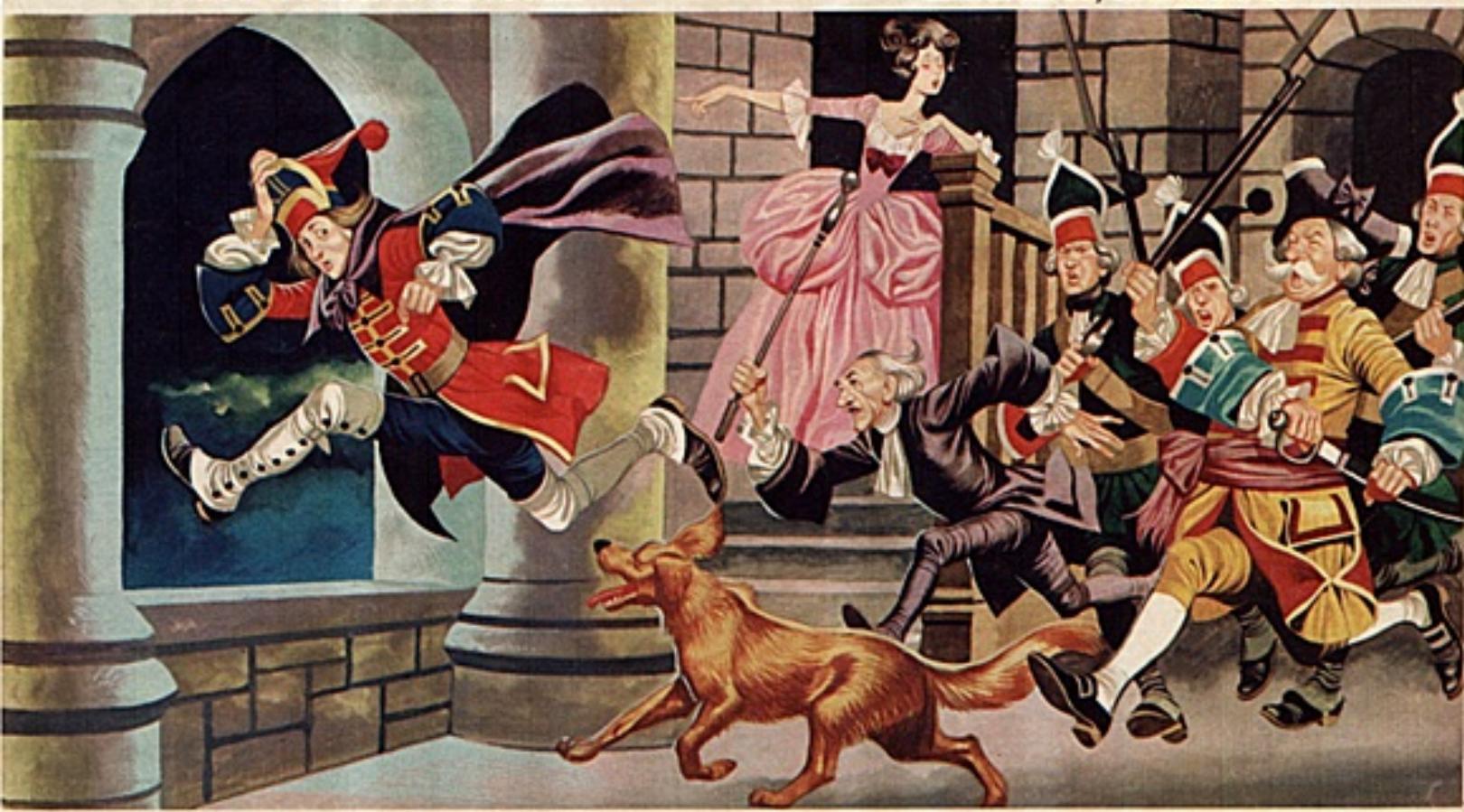
4. Next day, Princess Griselda again invited the soldier to take a walk with her in the garden. "Let us sit here on this seat in the quiet shade of this tree," she said. "Then you can tell me of your brave adventures at the wars." But as the soldier was speaking, the Princess reached round to his pocket, quietly pulled out the magic purse and put the other in its place.



5. Later, the three soldiers set out for their own home and, happening to need some money, decided to take some from the magic purse. But, alas, there was no magic about it. No gold coins poured from it, and the soldier knew how foolish he had been to show it to the Princess. "She has stolen it," he said. "Never mind, I will get it back," said the soldier with the cloak.



6. He quickly threw the cloak around his shoulders and made a wish to be back at the Royal castle, in the room of Princess Griselda. Of course, he was whisked there in a flash and soon saw that his companion's guess had been right. For the greedy Princess was seated upon her bed, amusing herself by showering out golden coins so that they fell all around her.



7. But the soldier stood looking at her too long. She turned round, and the moment she saw him she started to her feet and cried out with all her force, "Thieves! Thieves!" Soldiers and members of the King's court came rushing to her aid. The dogs, too, bounded towards the soldier, barking furiously at him.

8. The poor soldier thought it was high time he got out as fast as he could. So, without thinking of the ready way of travelling which the magic cloak could give him, he sought to make his escape by leaping out through the window, with the dogs snapping and snarling at his heels. "Stop him," cried the Princess.

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1. Having wished himself into the Royal Palace with the help of the magic cloak, the poor soldier was now wishing himself out of it in the greatest possible hurry. The greedy Princess, who had already stolen a magic purse from another of the three soldiers, summoned help by loudly shouting: "Thieves and robbers!"

2. There was such a commotion that the soldier took the nearest way out, through the window. He fell through the branches of a tree and reached the ground without hurting himself. Then he ran away as fast as his legs would carry him—leaving behind the magic cloak, caught upon a branch of the tree in the garden.



3. The soldier escaped, but one of the courtiers took down the magic cloak and carried it to Princess Griselda, who was quite delighted. "Thank you, good sir," she said. "It matters little that the thief escaped, for he did not manage to steal anything from my room. Leave the cloak with me. If he returns and tries to get it back then he will easily be caught by the royal guard."



4. The cunning and greedy Princess did not say anything about the true value of the magic cloak—but the soldiers knew its real worth and were most upset. "Now we have lost two of our treasures—the magic purse and the magic cloak, both taken by the Princess," sighed one. The third soldier, however, waved the magic music horn. "Cheer up, for I have a good idea," he said.



5. By blowing a few notes on the horn, the soldier called up a great army, with mounted men and cannons. "Surround this palace and be prepared to attack it if needed," he told the commander. "Inside the palace are two treasures stolen from my friends, and if they are not returned then I will order a bombardment."

6. "My cannons are loaded and at the ready, sir," the captain of artillery said. "Give the word and I will blow down the walls of that palace." "The foot-soldiers and cavalry are also ready, sir," reported another captain. "They will storm through the holes in the palace walls and capture it without delay."



7. The King was most alarmed about this and hurried to speak with his daughter. "Is my palace to be blown to bits because of a purse and a cloak?" he demanded. "You must give them back at once." "Do not be frightened, father," answered Princess Griselda. "Nothing like that will happen. Leave it to me."



8. The Princess had already thought of a cunning scheme. She dressed herself as a gipsy dancing girl and set out at night with her maid. "Come," she told the girl. "We will visit the camp of the soldiers outside, and, while I entertain the men with singing and dancing, you will perform a simple task for me."

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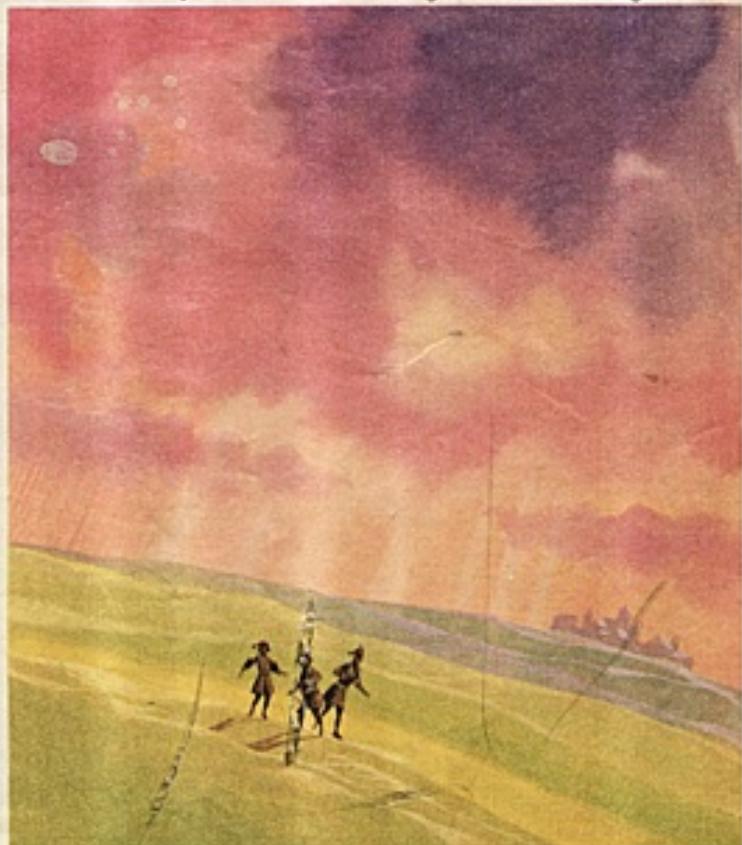
1. Because her father's Royal palace had been surrounded by a great army of soldiers, Princess Griselda thought of a clever plan to get rid of them. "They demand the return of the magic cloak and magic purse which I took from two of the soldiers," she said. "But if I also get hold of the magic horn I can soon remove them."

Dressed as a gipsy singer she went to the camp.

2. There she danced and sang songs so beautifully that all the soldiers gathered around her and the tents were left empty. And among the soldiers was the one to whom the magic horn belonged. "How sweetly the girl sings," he said to his companions. "She could charm a bird from a tree." Griselda smiled, and intending only to charm away the music horn, she gave her maid a signal.



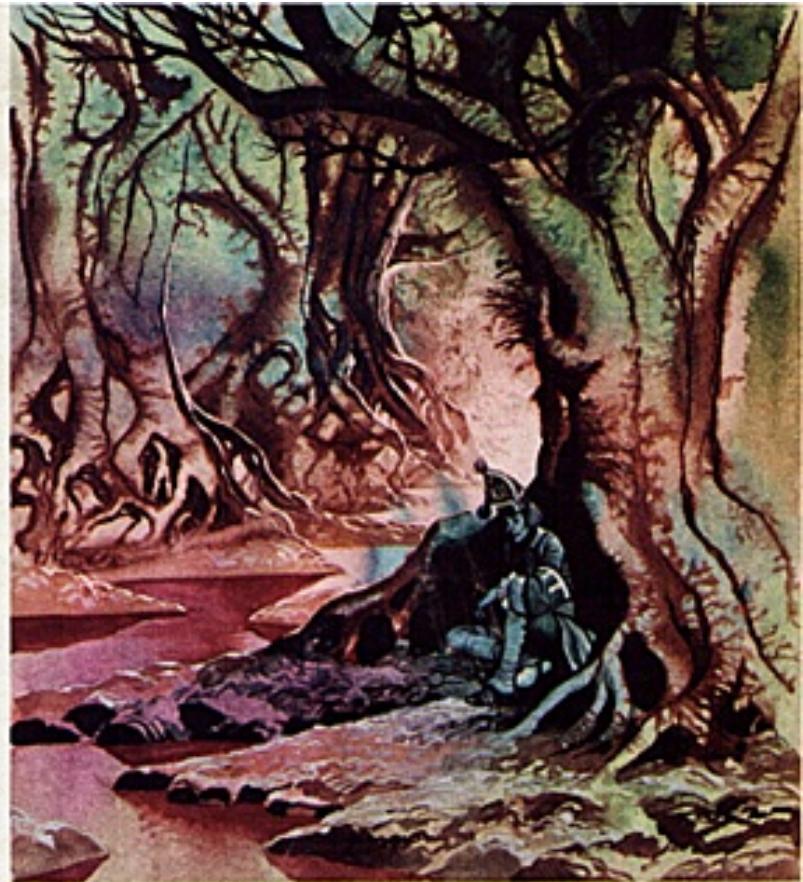
3. The maid slipped quietly through the crowd and went into the tent where the magic horn hung, and took it away without anyone seeing her. "So far, so good," she said, with a sigh of relief. "Now to carry out the second part of the Princess's plan. She said that I was to blow upon the horn as loudly as I could."



4. When the maid did this a strange thing happened. The army, the tents, the cannons and the horses all disappeared in a great flash of light. Nothing was left but the empty slopes and the three soldier companions, who had now lost all three of their wonderful gifts. Poor fellows, they wondered what to do next.



5. "Now we are back to where we started, comrades," said the soldier who had once had the magic purse. "We have no money and no home, so we had better separate. Let each seek his fortune as best he can." This was agreed by the other two, who decided to stick together and in this way the soldiers parted company.



6. The soldier who went on his own wandered on, but discovered nothing to cheer him in the countryside. By nightfall he was weary and hungry and he came to a forest. Now, this forest was the one where the three of them had met with so much good luck before, but the soldier fell asleep, too tired to think of it.



7. Morning dawned and he opened his eyes. "Oh, what wonder of wonders!" he exclaimed as he looked around. "Here am I in need of food and there above me are tree-branches laden with ripe apples. Now at least I shall not starve. I only wish that my two companions were with me to share in this good fortune."



8. The hungry soldier soon plucked and ate an apple, then a second and then a third. "They have a more delicious taste than any apples I have ever known," he said. But a strange feeling came over his nose. With each bite from the third apple his nose began to grow longer and longer and longer.

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1. A strange feeling had come over the soldier in the forest. When he put the third apple to his mouth to take a bite from it, something was in the way. It was his nose—which was growing longer and longer and longer. "Good gracious," he gasped in horror, "when will it stop growing?" It seemed that every time he chewed and swallowed a piece of apple, it grew more!

2. His nose kept creeping out farther and farther. Soon it was a yard long, then two yards at least. A bird came fluttering into the forest glade and perched itself on the long, straight nose, looking a little puzzled because it had never before seen a tree branch quite like it. Other animals came along and they, too, were puzzled, wondering at the strange long-nosed creature, which had suddenly appeared in their midst.



3. Meanwhile, the soldier's two companions were travelling on through the forest, when all of a sudden one of them gave a loud cry. "Look out—it's a snake!" he exclaimed. But when they took a closer look they saw that it was a long, moving nose.



4. "We must follow it and find out its owner," they decided. So they traced it back, until at last they found their unlucky comrade sitting under the apple tree. "There is some magic in this," said one of them. "What can be done to stop the spell?"



5. "I can think of nothing," sighed the gloomy long-nosed one. "What a life I shall have with this enormous nose. How people will point at me and laugh at my misfortune." All three of them sat down in despair, and then suddenly there appeared their old friend the dwarf. "How now, my friends!" he said with a chuckle. "You seem most upset, so I must find a cure for you."

6. "I wish you could, good sir," said the long-nosed soldier. "I would be most grateful to get rid of this snake-like nose, which is a great misery to me." The little dwarf chuckled and reached up to pick a ripe pear from another tree close by. "All things are simple when you know the magic of the forest like I do," he said. "Here is the answer to your problem."



7. He then told the soldier to take a bite from the ripe pear, and when this had been done and the piece chewed and swallowed, the nose began to creep back towards his face. It became less and less in size, shrinking inch by inch until at last, wonder of wonders, the nose was again its normal size. "How can I ever thank you for what you have done, sir?" asked the soldier.



8. "There is no need," answered the happy dwarf. "I will even do something more for you. Take some of these apples and pears with you and visit the princess who stole your purse, cloak and music horn. Whoever eats an apple will have his nose grow long, but give him a pear and all will come right again. So go to the princess and try one of the apples on her royal nose."

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1. All kinds of fortune had befallen the three jolly soldiers. It was good luck when a kind little dwarf gave them gifts of a magic purse, a magic cloak and a magic music horn. But it was bad luck when all three things were stolen by greedy Princess Griselda, and bad luck again when one of the soldiers ate a magic apple which made his nose grow. However, by good luck, the dwarf appeared again.

2. He cured the long nose by giving the soldier a ripe pear to eat and then sent him off to the castle, disguised as a gardener's boy, to tempt the Princess with one of the nose-growing apples. "Halt!" said the guard at the gate. "Who goes there?" "A friend with special ripe apples for the Princess," replied the soldier. "They are finer and more beautiful than any ever seen before."



3. Other people came along and when they saw the shining apples in the soldier's basket they wanted a taste. "Look here, my fine fellow," said the officer of the guard, "I will buy one. How much are they?" The soldier waved him away with a smile. "I'm sorry, sir, but apples like these are only fit for a princess," he said.



4. So he gave the apples only to the castle maid and she hurried to the Princess, who was about to have breakfast in bed. "Try one of these apples, my lady," she said. "They look quite delicious." The Princess thought so, too, and took a large bite. But then she dropped the apple with a scream, because her nose started to grow.



5. Soon the royal nose was stretching to the end of the bed, and the wails of the Princess brought the King rushing into the room. "What has happened, daughter?" he gasped. "Why is your nose getting longer and longer with every passing moment?" "I know not," the Princess answered. "But do something to stop it, and quickly before my nose stretches right out through the window."



6. The King had no idea what to do. "Cleverer brains than mine are needed in a case like this," he thought. So he sent out a royal herald with a proclamation. "All people in this kingdom shall listen to the wishes of His Royal Majesty," said the herald in a loud voice. "Be it known that the Princess is suffering from an affliction of the nose, and a cure for it will gain reward."



7. Now, this was all part of the dwarf's plan and when the news went round the kingdom of the sad affair of the Princess's nose, the three soldiers were ready for action. One of them had already dressed himself in clothes fit for a clever doctor, and in a bag he placed some ripe pears. "Leave this to me, my friends," he told his companions. "I will attend upon the greedy Princess."



8. So off he marched to the Royal Palace and asked the guard at the gate to let him through at once. "I have heard that Princess Griselda suffers from a nose complaint that is most unusual," he said. "Now, it so happens that I am a nose-expert from a distant country and I have treated some of the most famous noses in the world." "Then come in at once, good sir," said the gate-minder.

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1. Having greedily eaten one of the magic apples belonging to the three soldiers, Princess Griselda woke up one morning with a nose fifty times as long as it should be. "Oh, what a horrid sight I look," she wailed. "Can no one cure me?"

One soldier, disguised as a doctor, said that he would try.



2. But instead of giving the Princess a magic pear, which could cure her, he gave her another bite of the nose-growing apple. Next morning, the Princess's nose was twice as long as it was before and the King was most upset. "I beg of you to find a cure for her," he said.



3. The soldier thought about this and then shook his head, as a doctor might do when baffled by an ailment. "Your Majesty, it seems that something works against my cure and is too strong for it," he said. "However, I think I know what it is. Your daughter has some goods which do not belong to her, and if she does not give them back I can do nothing."



4. The King knew that this was indeed the truth, for Princess Griselda had cunningly stolen three magic things from the three soldiers—a purse, a cloak and a music horn. So he marched back to the bedroom. "Griselda," he told his daughter, "it is your own fault that your nose cannot be made shorter. Send back the purse, the cloak and the music horn."



5. Later that day when the "doctor" soldier called again to see the Princess, her servant had collected the three things. "Ah, that is most excellent," the soldier said. "I will see that they are returned to their rightful owners. Meanwhile you can give the Princess this ripe pear to cure her long nose."



6. The pear, of course, was a magic one and it was also the only known cure for long noses. Princess Griselda was eager to try it and by the time the doctor left the castle, she was up and dressed and delighted because her nose was again its right size. "Thankyou, doctor, for your cure," she said.



7. As soon as she was out of the castle, the soldier slipped on the magic cloak and wished himself back with his two companions. You can imagine how overjoyed they were to see him. "Now we are back where we started . . . with the magic means to keep us in great wealth," they chuckled.

8. The first thing they wished for was a stream of gold coins from the magic purse and with this they bought a fine and stately coach, with horses and driver. Then they set off across the countryside through the flowering trees to look for fresh adventures. And so we wish them luck and leave them.